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High-level segment

Provisional summary record of the 18th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 2 July 2008, at 3 p.m.

President:	Mr. Dapkiunas (Vice-President)	(Belarus)
later:	Mr. Mérorès (President)	(Haiti)
later:	Mr. Monteiro Lima (Vice-President)	(Cape Verde)

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In the absence of Mr. Mérorès (Haiti), Mr. Dapkiunas (Belarus), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

High-level segment:

(b) Development Cooperation Forum (*continued*)

(c) Annual ministerial review: Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to sustainable development (*continued*)

(d) Thematic discussion: Promoting an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries for poverty eradication and sustainable development, taking into account current challenges (*continued*)

General debate for the high-level session (*continued*) (E/2008/10, E/2008/11, E/2008/15, E/2008/33, E/2008/50, E/2008/56, E/2008/57, E/2008/68, E/2008/69, E/2008/70, E/2008/75, E/2008/78, E/2008/79, E/2008/81, E/2008/85, E/2008/86 and E/2008/88; E/2008/NGO/1, E/2008/NGO/2, E/2008/NGO/3, E/2008/NGO/4, E/2008/NGO/5, E/2008/NGO/6, E/2008/NGO/7, E/2008/NGO/9, E/2008/NGO/10, E/2008/NGO/11, E/2008/NGO/12, E/2008/NGO/13, E/2008/NGO/14, E/2008/NGO/15, E/2008/NGO/16, E/2008/NGO/17, E/2008/NGO/18 and E/2008/NGO/19; E/2008/CRP.2 and E/2008/CRP.3)

1. **Mr. Rivas Palacios** (Paraguay) said that his country's economy was closely linked to the agricultural sector. The Government had drawn up an agrarian and rural development plan to coordinate the action of the public, private and international sectors, and to apply government policies based on the principles of equity, sustainability and effectiveness. It gave priority to thoroughgoing institutional reform to enable Paraguay to enter regional and global markets with competitive products on fair and satisfactory terms for the rural producer. Rural development was, accordingly, making significant headway, as was the integration and strengthening of the economy and consequently the well-being of Paraguayan peasants. The rural sector produced over 90 per cent of the country's exports, making Paraguay a net exporter of food to the world. Paraguay urged the developed countries, in the interests of equal competition and economic freedom, to eliminate agricultural subsidies and trade barriers: the greater the volume of agricultural exports, the greater the employment and the lesser the migration to urban areas and abroad. The ultimate result would be the reduction of poverty in rural areas.

2. Rising oil prices, however, compromised the ability of countries with more vulnerable economies to continue improving their population's quality of life. The cost of oil was one of the main reasons for the rise in food prices, although climate change and financial speculation had also had a decisive impact. Landlocked developing countries like Paraguay generally had to pay 20 per cent more for the transport of imported oil, which itself was constantly increasing in cost and in turn affecting the production costs for imports and exports. Recent studies had shown the link between oil and food prices: between 2000 and 2008, for instance, oil had quintupled in price while the cost of milk had more than tripled, and that same ratio applied generally to the cost of living.

3. As a net importer of oil, Paraguay must find alternative sources of energy to reduce agricultural production and transport costs. Its Congress had passed legislation promoting biofuels, as renewable sources with a low environmental impact. The main such source in Paraguay was sugarcane, which could be diverted without affecting food security.

4. **Ms. Kieber-Beck** (Liechtenstein) said that progress on the social and economic dimensions of sustainable development had been slow and uneven. Implementation of the global commitments to sustainable development required national ownership and leadership as well as responsible domestic institutions, an inclusive dialogue that involved also civil society, local authorities, the private sector, and discussions of the issues by the media. Cooperation between States and within international organizations was also indispensable, especially when dealing with global crises.

5. Reflecting international developments in the field, Liechtenstein's law on international humanitarian cooperation and development covered social development and poverty reduction, the preservation of the environment for future generations and a responsible, sustainable approach to natural resources. Microfinance was one important tool that had proved particularly successful in a multitude of development activities. Liechtenstein had set up a microfinance

partnership supported by the Government with the private sector as the main driving force.

6. Liechtenstein was currently a party to 28 conventions and protocols in the area of environmental protection, chief among them the Kyoto Protocol, and it looked forward to the early establishment of more far-reaching greenhouse gas reduction targets after 2012, with the conclusion of a new agreement at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in 2009. Her own Government had a wide-ranging strategy on climate change. At the regional level, it was actively involved in cross-border activities, with a strong emphasis on the environmental aspect of sustainable development. As an Alpine country, Liechtenstein had a particular commitment to the sustainable development of the Alps, which like all mountains have an important source of key natural resources and recreation; it was sponsoring specific development projects in mountain villages in central Asia and the Caucasus. It was also dedicated to sustaining and developing the Lake Constance region in a holistic way and, as chair of the International Conference on Lake Constance, it had led the discussions on modifying the Lake Constance Agenda 21, based on the Rio Agenda 21 of 1992, and had helped draw up a report on the regional consequences of climate change.

7. **Mr. Mottaki** (Observer for the Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the unfolding crisis endangered the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), while rapid population growth threatened social and political stability in many countries. It was vital that collective action be taken in order to effectively implement the major global agreements on sustainable development.

8. It was also important, however, to examine the root of the problem. Since the end of the cold war, the hegemonic policies of certain great Powers had led to an unjust, undemocratic and unequal system of global governance. Over the previous four years, the flawed economic policies of such Powers had contributed to the worldwide increase in nominal oil and food prices. The international financial system was skewed towards the wealthiest countries, which were draining the financial resources of the poorest. The rise in energy prices was not supply-related: it had been caused by factors such as fluctuating commercial stock levels and the depreciation of the dollar. Moreover, some developed countries had raised the tax on crude oil by up to 55 per cent in 2007, thereby gaining more from the sale of each litre than the oil-producing countries.

9. He called upon developed countries to fulfil their commitment to reduce greenhouse gases and increase support for developing countries. South-South partnerships were also essential. A recent example was the meeting of the Ministers of Economic Affairs of States Members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) Fund held in Isfahan, Iran.

10. The world was witnessing the demise of an economic order implicitly based on the global governance of certain great Powers. By working to create a new system conducive to sustainable development, the Council would enhance the credibility and prestige of the international organizations. To that end, the Council should seek to identify the political, technical and financial obstacles facing developing countries and to integrate sustainable development policies. The forthcoming international meetings would likewise provide an opportunity for developed countries to adopt more sustainable consumption patterns based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

11. **Mr. Elwarfally** (Observer for the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said the current crisis was a result of the flawed international food security policies of the previous two decades, which had ignored the risks posed by population growth, climate change, declining agriculture, speculation and the rapid shift to a knowledge-based economy, described by Alvin Toffler as "super-symbolic".

12. Those challenges could be addressed by promoting agriculture. Developed countries should eliminate subsidies to their own farmers, thereby allowing agriculture in developing countries to flourish. The principle of regional complementarity would allow each country to invest in the sector to which its climate was best suited. In that connection, the initiatives adopted by the African Union and NEPAD deserved support.

13. Progress towards the MDGs had been insufficient, partly because the promised support had not materialized. He hoped that commitments to support development in Africa would be honoured, and that the high-level meeting on Africa's development needs scheduled for 22 September 2008 would provide an opportunity to do so.

14. As an arid country, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya was particularly affected by climate change. Projects such as the Great Artificial River, consisting of a network of pipes transporting millions of square metres of pure water from the desertic South to the more densely populated North, were not in themselves sufficient. He therefore called for a comprehensive global agreement based on the principles of the Earth Summit in Rio, which would address the causes of climate change and ensure that developing countries had the means to adapt, thereby fostering a new way of thinking for a new age.

15. **Mr. Nakayama** (Japan) said that his delegation supported efforts to strengthen the Council, including the launch of the Development Cooperation Forum.

16. At the fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) in May, participants had agreed on the importance of ownership and partnership, as well as on the concept of human security to protect and empower people and communities. Japan was committed to ensuring follow-up to the outcome of the Conference. Given the challenges faced by Africa in achieving sustainable development and the MDGs, the issues discussed, such as climate change and peace consolidation, were also priorities for the world.

17. Climate change and the environment, the MDGs and the global food crisis were all interrelated, key issues for sustainable development. With regard to climate change, it was time for the world to move towards a low carbon society for the sake of future generations, and technology was vital for achieving that goal. As well as disseminating existing advanced technologies, it was also important to develop innovative carbon-free technologies, such as the new fuel-cell hydrogen vehicle that Japan would be showcasing at the Group of Eight (G8) Hokkaido Toyako Summit. Among other measures, Japan had also established a US$ 10 billion financial mechanism, known as the "Cool Earth Partnership", to support developing countries' efforts to tackle climate change.

18. As regards the MDGs, Japan had, through the G8 process, been advocating the importance of health, education and water and sanitation for human security. As for the global food crisis, Japan welcomed the work to establish a United Nations Comprehensive Framework for Action. It had declared its willingness to release over 300 thousand tons of imported rice and provide financial support to boost food production for poor farmers, stressing the importance of improving agricultural productivity and adopting stronger discipline with regard to export restrictions.

19. **Mr. Naranjo Paz** (Cuba) said that sustainable development for all could not be achieved while the current unsustainable production and consumption patterns prevailed. Rather than seeking only market solutions, economic development must advance in parallel with social development and guarantee environmental protection. The unsustainability of the economic and political world order was further highlighted by the current food crisis. The issue of global food shortages had in fact been raised as early as 1996, at the World Food Summit in Rome. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the world already produced enough food to feed every human being.

20. Developing countries were not responsible for the current environmental problems and development could not be denied to those who needed it most. Those who had hoarded wealth and technologies and were responsible for 76 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions should shoulder the main responsibility for combating climate change.

21. Little had been said about the international cooperation needed to favour financing for development, and huge amounts of financial resources continued to flow from the developing to the developed world. Developing countries needed to receive additional resources under preferential terms, without conditions and on the basis of new principles for international cooperation, which must respect national priorities and not be manipulated on the basis of political interests. Despite being a poor country, and notwithstanding the 50-year blockade on its economic and social development, Cuba had shared its resources with countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America on the basis of principles such as solidarity rather than competition, recognition of tacit knowledge, and respect for the needs of those requiring cooperation. He wondered how much more could be achieved with just a fraction of the money spent worldwide on arms each year.

22. **Mr. Waszczykowski** (Poland) said that, while urgent short-term measures were required to respond effectively to requests for assistance from the countries worst hit by the food crisis, long-term international

action, leading to major structural changes in global agriculture policy, was also needed to alleviate its effects. International financial institutions could provide financial support for low-income countries and international brainstorming could be used to establish how to effectively share best practices in agricultural production. It was essential to facilitate the access of small-scale food producers to seeds, fertilizers and technical assistance. Some of those actions were included in the Declaration of the High-Level Conference on World Food Security held in Rome in June.

23. The food problem was closely linked with climate change, and more research was needed to map its consequences at the regional and local levels. Climate change was at the top of Poland's political agenda and in December it would host the fourteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the fourth Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, which it hoped would represent an important step forward under the Bali road map. All countries must be involved in creating a post-2012 cooperative regime, since rapid economic development was currently often achieved by investing in sectors that generated huge quantities of greenhouse gases and the investment decisions taken today would have a major impact on climate in the next 50 years. Poland was a good example of a country where strong growth in gross domestic product (GDP) had not weakened the determination to cut greenhouse gas emissions, which had fallen by 4 per cent between 1995 and 2005 while GDP had almost tripled over the same period.

24. **Mr. Mwenifumbo** (Malawi) said that the reduction of poverty in rural areas — where 85 per cent of the population of Malawi lived — was of paramount importance to the Malawi Government, which had developed an Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Strategy to advance economic growth in those areas. Recognizing that rural areas were potential engines of economic growth, Malawi had targeted them with priority initiatives focused on, among others, agriculture and food security; irrigation and water development; transport infrastructure development; and energy generation and supply.

25. Malawi appreciated the support it had received from its development partners, but more needed to be done if the country was to implement its development strategy. In particular it appealed for additional and adequate resources to turn its natural resource wealth into the sustainable economic growth that would enable it to fulfil its national development aspirations. Malawi had already, with limited resources, achieved household and national food security through a targeted agricultural subsidy programme. Its experience showed that investing in small-scale agriculture was key for achieving sustained economic growth in least developed countries.

26. Access to international markets on equitable terms was also essential for sustainable development and poverty reduction in those countries. Malawi called in particular for the removal of agricultural subsidies in developed countries to make the agricultural products of developing countries competitive on the world market.

27. **Mr. Dahinden** (Observer for Switzerland) said that climate change was one of the most pressing and serious issues faced by the international community. Given the threat posed to ecosystems, it was vital to adopt adaptation and mitigation measures and find alternative sources of energy. It was now accepted that poverty, patterns of production and consumption, and natural resource management were inter-dependent issues, and climate change should therefore be taken into account in all decisions, as part of a wider sustainable development perspective. More investment was required to design and implement integrated poverty and environmental impact indicators, and Switzerland was contributing to an initiative that aimed to test such an integrated approach. It was also urgent to place greater value on ecosystems, by developing instruments to promote the responsible use of natural resources and implementing financial transfer and tax exemption schemes to compensate those who looked after the world's ecosystems.

28. The current food crisis highlighted the lack of investments in the agriculture and rural development of many developing countries, but also the neglect of productive sectors by donor countries, including Switzerland. The agricultural policies of many countries had been characterized by a lack of sustainability in recent years, whereas agriculture actually needed both to meet the demand for food and to provide essential environmental services.

29. The challenges of climate change and the food crisis required innovative approaches, including increased aid quality and private-sector involvement.

The United Nations could and must play a key role in finding solutions. Switzerland supported the Council's active contribution in that regard and saw the role of the Development Cooperation Forum as being to provide a framework for dialogue.

30. **Mr. Katjavivi** (Observer for Namibia) said that the new functions of the Economic and Social Council should elevate it to the position it was meant to occupy within the United Nations.

31. Despite the commitments made at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, poverty remained a global challenge, highlighting the urgency with which the international community should seek sustainable development-oriented solutions to rural development. Agriculture had been neglected for a long time, owing in part to the ill-conceived policies of some international institutions, which had advised Governments in the developing world to pursue neo-liberal policies and leave agriculture to the whims of market forces, while agriculture in the developed world was heavily subsidized.

32. Namibia had enshrined sustainable development at all key levels of its national planning processes and was pursuing a holistic approach to rural development, combining attempts to boost agricultural production with measures to improve access to social infrastructure and services, including clean and safe water. Climate change and climatic variability, such as severe droughts alternating with flooding, were, however, threatening to reverse those achievements, negatively affecting already low food production and destroying infrastructure. Skyrocketing food prices, compounded by oil price rises, were also jeopardizing many households. The Namibian Government had taken emergency measures to mitigate the effects of food price increases but the crisis also called for concerted international efforts to increase investment in agricultural production, accelerate the transfer of technology and capacity-building, and re-examine the structural defects of the world economy. Namibia called on the Economic and Social Council to play its coordinating role in those efforts.

33. **Mr. Akram** (Pakistan) observed that, when the central banks of the major industrial countries intervened in financial or credit crises, they should give precedence to growth over inflation control, so that their policies would not depress the economies of the South and would alleviate the inordinate growth burden on the emerging markets of Asia. Above all, the industrial economies should not resort to a new protectionism, and should not step back from commitments to increase official development assistance (ODA) significantly.

34. The Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, to be held later that year in Doha, would be an important opportunity to address the challenges that had appeared in the past five years and their root causes. The Conference should focus first on a comprehensive restructuring of the international financial system, to bring the international monetary system back to its two essential purposes: ensuring global financial stability and making financing available in cases of urgent need. Secondly, the Doha Conference should consider how to restructure the global trading system, going beyond the Doha Round of trade negotiations, which if successful would produce commitments by the industrialized North to eliminate agricultural export subsidies, reduce domestic agricultural support and eliminate some tariffs, but which would likely not address the major concerns of the developing countries regarding the new forms of protectionism. The Conference should, thirdly, deal with the constraints on access to the technology so vital for development and for dealing with food, energy or climate change challenges, and should review the trade-related aspects of international property rights.

35. There was no question that rising food and energy prices had contributed to the resurgence of poverty and the regression of the Millennium Development Goals. A comprehensive strategy to address the food crisis should be developed jointly by the Secretary-General's Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis and Member States. Similarly, there had to be a fair and comprehensive approach to the problem of energy prices, following the welcome initiatives by Saudi Arabia and Jordan with other steps to moderate prices and meet the financial needs of the most severely affected developing countries. Most vital were money and technology, and the United Nations must take the lead in generating both.

36. To meet the challenge of climate change, action was required first and foremost from the industrialized countries, which bore the main responsibility for the climate threat to the world, and the developing countries must not be asked to forgo prosperity and

dignity for the past and continuing profligacy of the rich. In order for the developing countries to participate in the solution, they must be assisted, significantly and urgently, to design and implement a climate-friendly development model. To that end, a number of concerned diplomats, officials and academic experts were planning to launch a research programme whose aim was to support developing countries in preparing an integrated strategy on sustainable economic development and climate change and in the process identify a possible agenda for global cooperation.

37. The challenges were huge, and history would record whether the Members of the United Nations had lived up to the challenges or succumbed to them through inertia and narrow self-interest.

38. **Mr. Botora** (Observer for Ethiopia), speaking on behalf of the African Group, said that Africa suffered from dire poverty and often meagre economic resources, and was therefore particularly affected by the current economic turmoil. Developed countries were neglecting the quality, predictability and effectiveness of aid. African countries continued to be marginalized by unfair trade laws and practices, and a swift conclusion to the Doha Round appeared unlikely.

39. A mechanism should be put in place to promote an integrated approach to rural development, highlighting the links between environmental sustainability, agricultural productivity and rural poverty. Institutional and strategic frameworks should be developed to fulfil the requirements of sustainable development, alongside programmes engaging with local people and issues.

40. The Group hoped that development partners would keep their promises, and that the Accra High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness would address that issue. It called on the international community to work with national governments to promote debt sustainability through comprehensive debt relief and management programmes.

41. The monitoring of MDGs also required attention. In particular, the United Nations should prepare a comprehensive matrix to follow up the implementation of Goal 8, which lacked specific benchmarks. The Council's role in promoting dialogue was welcome, and its subsidiary bodies deserved to be strengthened.

42. **Ms. Jahan** (Observer for Bangladesh), speaking on behalf of the least developed countries, said that the deepening global economic, energy, food and climate-change crises affected all developing countries, especially the poorest. The United Nations and the Council must provide effective policy review, policy dialogue and recommendations to overcome current crises and threats. Responses to the food and commodity price spikes must be coherent and multifaceted to address short-, medium- and long-term needs.

43. The international community should consider creating a global food bank to ensure long-term food security for developing countries. Investment in agriculture and rural infrastructure should be scaled up significantly to enhance agricultural production and improve the livelihoods of the rural poor. The least developed countries needed broader support and global partnerships to achieve sustainable agricultural development. Development partners must also fulfil the commitments they had made at recent international conferences and meetings of the past decade, while an enabling international economic environment was needed to buttress national efforts.

44. With falling real official development assistance (ODA) and ratios of ODA to gross national income (GNI), current aid was insufficient for achieving internationally agreed development goals. Developed countries should fulfil their aid commitments in the form of direct, predictable and flexible budget support. The Secretary-General should undertake a systematic review of existing mechanisms for sustainable development, and report to the Council on the quality of ODA.

45. She called for a successful conclusion of the Doha Round of trade negotiations, and for developed countries, and developing ones in a position to do so, unilaterally to provide duty- and quota-free market access to all products from all least developed countries before the conclusion of those negotiations. Moreover, the Doha Round should tackle the systemic distortions in the international market for food and other agricultural products; all outstanding debt of all least developed countries should be written off immediately; and technology transfer to the least developed countries should be facilitated by the provision of access to appropriate technologies on a concessional and preferential basis.

46. **Mr. Ali** (Malaysia) observed that global inflation and climate change were being compounded by the deflation of the financial markets of the developed world. Long-term effects could be expected, and the remedy would be a fundamental change in lifestyle, economic activity and the overall relationship with the environment.

47. The promise of sustainable development had not been kept for various reasons. First, the lack of political commitment and the readiness to pass the burden of action to the developing world by focusing on the period after 2012. Secondly, a way had not been found to balance the competing demands of the three pillars of sustainable development — economic growth, social development and environmental protection. Furthermore, governments and the private sector had not yet arrived at a proper division of work, although action by both was essential. Also, there was currently no international framework for promoting the critical elements of infrastructure development and transfer of technology, where the developing world lacked the means and market solutions had to be complemented by government intervention. In addition, demographic concerns had not been adequately taken into account in sustainable development policies, in terms of both population volume and rural-to-urban population movements, leading to the mistaken belief that the path to rapid development lay in industrialization rather than agriculture, the traditional source of food in the developing world, and the consequent neglect of that sector. It was a matter of urgency for the Council to adopt a coherent and consistent approach.

48. **Ms. Viotti** (Brazil) said that little attention had been paid to an important factor in the current crisis, namely, commodities speculation, whose consequences had been immediately felt in soaring prices for oil and food. Food and energy security were increasingly interdependent. The dramatic increase in oil prices should be examined more thoroughly by the General Assembly, especially since the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) High-Level Conference on World Food Security the previous month had not been able to adopt medium- and long-term measures to restore the capacity of developing countries to feed their populations and supply the international markets, and had not dealt with the impact of the energy markets on food prices.

49. The export subsidies and domestic support for agricultural products in developed countries had distorted trade and were a significant disincentive to agriculture in developing countries, and they should be eliminated. Another opportunity for developing countries would be the production of biofuels to generate income and promote food and energy security. Economically and environmentally, Brazil had had good experience with sugar-cane-based ethanol. Like Brazil, over 100 other developing countries, given adequate resources and technologies, would be able to produce biofuels while sustaining a flourishing agriculture, supplying energy to their own people, and achieving rural development. Accordingly, the President of Brazil had invited representatives from all interested countries to participate in an International Conference on Biofuels in São Paolo in November 2008.

50. In promoting rural development, Brazil had placed the right to food at the core of its public policy agendas. It had broadened agrarian reform, increased support to small-scale agriculture and given credit and technical assistance to help farmers market their products. A 2006 law on food and nutritional security had made access to food a permanent policy; and a family allowance programme was benefiting over 11 million of the country's poor.

51. The eradication of poverty was not only a development objective but also the fulfilment of a human right. Indeed, giving economic growth an ethical dimension was a principle rooted in the Brazilian Constitution, with its strong commitment to human dignity. In meeting the many challenges affecting both developed and developing countries, the struggle — particularly to eradicate poverty and hunger — must be waged with determination and a heightened sense of solidarity. It was in rural areas that most of the bottom billion lived, and rural development was the key not only to alleviating the current dire situation but to laying the foundation of a fairer and more balanced world for future generations.

52. *Mr. Méroès (Haiti) took the Chair.*

53. **Ms. Blum** (Observer for Colombia) said that the current urgent interlinked challenges to sustainable development created unique opportunities and a need for increased technical and financial support for national efforts to deal with climate change. The revitalization and adaptation of the agricultural sector

was of fundamental importance, and must be supported by broader capacity-building, technology transfer and access to international markets. In that context, the reduction of protectionist measures and subsidies was critical. In addition, concerted action to boost renewable energy sources was no longer a luxury, but a precondition for sustainable development.

54. Colombia had made a priority of the production and use of alternative energy sources, including biofuels from sugar-cane and palm oil, which had expanded the rural economy without adversely affecting agricultural output. It was important that the Council help strengthen international technical and financial cooperation with middle-income countries, which faced significant challenges in achieving the MDGs owing to internal asymmetries. In addition, the Council could further promote South-South cooperation, support triangular modalities and ensure more active involvement by the United Nations system in replicating successful experiences and promoting capacity development.

55. **Mr. Al Bayati** (Iraq) said that, in Iraq's experience, development could take place only where there was a civil society based on democracy, equality, peace and stability. The situation in Iraq was improving. The approval of the Constitution had paved the way for a government of national unity. The International Compact with Iraq, launched on 16 March 2007 in cooperation with the United Nations, encompassed such areas as politics, economics, culture, health, development and reconstruction, and called for debts incurred by the previous regime to be cancelled. As a result of rising oil prices, a greater part of the national budget could be earmarked for development projects to ensure a higher standard of living for Iraqis. A new legal framework had been enacted to regulate domestic and foreign investment. The Constitution provided for intensified efforts to accede to international conventions on the environment, desertification and the ozone layer, and promoted women's issues and social welfare.

56. However, the agricultural sector faced a number of challenges. Landmines and radioactive shells were damaging the environment and affecting soil fertility. The assistance of the relevant United Nations agencies and allied countries would be needed in order to tackle the problem. In the same way, sustainable development depended on the acquisition of the appropriate technologies.

57. He therefore called on the Council to assist Iraq in achieving the MDGs; continuing poverty would create a breeding ground for violence and extremism.

58. **Mr. Mohamad** (Sudan) said that the current global crises had exposed deep inequality and structural weaknesses in the international system, revealing the need for an urgent global response with regard to governance and the implementation of development commitments. The Council was well positioned to play a leadership role in tackling those challenges.

59. Although it was implementing bilateral and regional partnerships in the area of food security and establishing a regulatory framework aimed at providing an environment conducive to foreign investment, his country still faced such challenges as climate change, which posed a serious threat to sustainable development. The Sudan's fragile ecosystems were under constant pressure from increased and more intense droughts and floods, affecting food security and public health, especially in the rural areas, where 70 per cent of the population lived. In response, the Sudan had created a national plan of action to identify priorities and address climate variability in the context of economic development. Another challenge was the Sudan's unsustainable debt burden, currently about $30 billion. He expressed disappointment that debt relief for the Sudan continued to be held hostage to political conditionality, despite the country's having met prudent macroeconomic relief criteria, and hoped that the newly established Debt Cancellation Fund would seriously address such obstacles and their impact on development efforts.

60. **Mr. Voto-Bernales** (Observer for Peru) said that sustainable development required cooperation and partnership based on national and international solidarity, especially in addressing environmental sustainability and overall socio-economic growth. In that regard, he noted the possibility of market-based mechanisms to protect biodiversity in developing countries, the need for more technical and financial assistance to combat desertification and for attaining sustainable-development goals, and the importance of support for building public-sector administrative and supervisory capacity in developing countries. The report before the Council (E/2008/12) stressed that environmental and biodiversity protection, as well as upgrading manufacturing facilities to meet stricter requirements of developed-country markets, were

critical issues requiring enhanced international support, through technical and financial assistance to developing countries. In the framework of intellectual property rights, Peru was particularly interested in protecting the intellectual and cultural heritage of its indigenous populations. Peru also supported initiatives to address restrictions on access to credit, which could adversely affect private investment in clean, efficient and sustainable manufacturing in developing countries.

61. **Mr. Natalegawa** (Indonesia) said that, halfway to the 2015 deadline for achieving the MDGs, the overall quality of life worldwide seemed to be worsening. The issue of energy security continued to burden industries and national infrastructure, while the threat of climate change continued to loom. It was distressing that the developing world continued to struggle with such challenges, to the detriment of achieving the MDGs.

62. A global approach was needed to address those ongoing challenges and the United Nations must be at the forefront of efforts to address the situation. Indonesia, together with Egypt and Chile, had proposed that food security and development should be the main theme for the sixty-third session of the General Assembly.

63. In addition, reform of the international financial architecture should make sustainable development a common endeavour. Indeed, it was time to practise good governance at the international level. Nationally, Indonesia had launched its most aggressive anti-corruption campaign, and called for vigorous reform to deal with both the food crisis and climate change. At the global level, reform of agricultural trade was needed worldwide to ensure market access for farmers in developing countries, as well as elimination of agricultural subsidies and other market-distorting measures in developed countries. Pervasive and vigorous reform was also needed to address climate change, especially in the area of forest protection.

64. Finally, he called for a genuine partnership in which global cooperation would replace global competition, in order to enable the countries of the world to face their common challenges and ensure a clean, safe, healthy and prosperous world for generations to come.

65. **Mr. Siles Alvarado** (Bolivia) said that countries like Bolivia suffered the consequences of unplanned industrialization, leading to a disconnect in the relationship of man with nature and rampant consumerism, which placed satisfaction of individual needs above the collective good. It was time for a new paradigm in which life was the highest value and the developed world allowed peoples to choose their own development models in keeping with their culture, traditions and aspirations.

66. The Government of Bolivia had taken an approach intended to maintain the balance between man and nature, a concept which was also transforming the relationship between the State and society. In the National Development Plan, the State had resumed a central role as an agent of development, creating opportunities for empowerment of indigenous and impoverished communities. In contrast to the colonialist model, the new development model recognized the culture and organizational structure of indigenous groups, relying on their local skills, experience and knowledge to become the engine of change.

67. In the UNDP Human Development Index, Bolivia's rating had risen from 0.692 in 2006 to 0.695 in 2007; the goal was to reach 0.7, or high-middle, within two years. Among measures which had led to that increase, hydrocarbon nationalization had generated a surplus of $1.4 million in 2007, which had been allocated to programmes to reduce the school drop-out rate and to provide benefits for low-income persons over 60 years of age. Over 97,000 jobs had been created in disadvantaged areas through public programmes and projects. With support from the Governments of Venezuela and Cuba, the "Yes I Can" literacy programme had reached over 600,000 people, with zero illiteracy as its goal. As an example of South-South cooperation, the People's Trade Treaty and the Bolivarian Alternative of the Americas (TCP-ALBA) had granted credit to indigenous communities to help them achieve self-sufficiency. The land reclamation and redistribution programme awarded collective title to communities in order to promote production.

68. Bolivia was making progress, despite the obstacles placed in its path by major interests to prevent it from choosing a development model where redistribution of wealth would be for the benefit of all. It intended to make multilateralism an effective tool in achieving international peace and security, consolidation of human rights, cooperation and solidarity and in protecting the environment.

69. **Mr. Ould Hadrami** (Mauritania) said that the alarming rise in food prices, if not addressed immediately, would have devastating economic repercussions on developing nations. Mauritania was one of the countries most affected by the crisis and the Government had taken urgent measures to alleviate its impact on Mauritanian citizens with limited income. However, individual efforts by any country would ultimately fall short without strong international support, particularly from rich countries, in the form of debt cancellation, facilitation of soft loans and provision of advanced agricultural equipment and fertilizer.

70. Mauritania had presented an integrated development plan to its economic partners at round table on Mauritania held in Paris the previous December. Despite the economic partners' approval of the plan, his Government was still awaiting fulfilment of the commitments made. At the halfway mark towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, the rich countries should fulfil the commitments they had made at various United Nations meetings and conferences. Economic, social and environmental dimensions must be taken into account in order to achieve sustainable development; shortcomings in any of those aspects would severely compromise development as a whole. In that context, he emphasized the importance of reversing climate change and called on industrialized countries to limit emissions of heat-trapping gases. Mauritania was among the 10 countries most affected by rising sea levels.

71. The developing countries attached great importance to financing for development, and he looked forward to the results of the upcoming Doha summit. He also expressed concern at the possible stalemate in the Doha round of trade negotiations and called on industrialized nations to show greater flexibility and strong political will in that regard. Finally, he thanked the rich countries that had recently committed to increasing food assistance to countries affected by the rise in food prices.

72. **Mr. Chidumo** (Mozambique) said that his Government shared the concerns expressed over the failure to reverse the negative impact of climate change, as well as the risks of the combined global financial, fuel and food crises, which could delay achievement of the MDGs, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Poverty eradication was the greatest challenge facing many developing countries. Those countries were doing their part by elaborating national development and poverty reduction strategies and guaranteeing transparent and efficient use of assistance. In response, developed countries should assume their share of responsibility by fulfilling their commitments to meet the internationally agreed assistance targets and creating an enabling environment for sustainable development.

73. The oil price crisis, food shortages and the prospects for a decline in world economic growth posed additional challenges to all, but the impact was more visible and painful in the least developed countries. In Mozambique, scarce financial resources made it impossible to keep up with increased commodity prices. Although the country's overall economic performance in 2007 had been reasonably good, poor performance in the agricultural sector could have negative implications for the people. A broader view must be taken of the food and agriculture system, including an integrated approach to investment in productivity and efficiency at all stages of the commodity value chain, from research and development to farm-level production, processing, storage, handling, transport and distribution to the consumer.

74. Developing countries found themselves in a vicious cycle of dependency and vulnerability that undermined their efforts to address such challenges as political instability, economic growth, poverty eradication, pandemic diseases, humanitarian disasters and environmental degradation. The broad goals of sustainable development called for a wide range of partnerships among all stakeholders, in order to put those countries on the path to sustained growth and improved standards of living.

75. **Mr. Üzümcüoğlu** (Observer for Turkey) said that poverty and hunger were economically unacceptable and politically dangerous, and that development issues and causes of conflict were often closely linked. Defeating world poverty would undoubtedly contribute to collective security and to the establishment of a more stable and peaceful international order.

76. Turkey was active in South-South and triangular cooperation, and was reinforcing its status as an emerging donor country at the regional and global levels. Its official development assistance had been steadily increasing in recent years, reaching 0.18 per

cent of GDP in 2006. Having made the transition from an agriculture-based economy to a trading and industrial economy, Turkey had much to share with countries which were going through a similar process. It had expanded its initial focus on Central Asia and the Caucasus to the least developed countries of Africa. Turkey had been identified as a pivotal country in the Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC) mechanism, and an umbrella project co-funded by UNDP and the Turkish Government was under way. It had also hosted a ministerial conference of the least developed countries in 2007.

77. Cross-cutting issues such as climate change and the food crisis had a direct bearing on development as a whole. The United Nations must support a more comprehensive and coherent development agenda to ensure greater coordination of the activities of its specialized agencies, funds and programmes, and Turkey was committed to playing its part in global development efforts.

78. *Mr. Monteiro Lima (Cape Verde), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

79. **Mr. Al-Ja'afari** (Observer for the Syrian Arab Republic) said that the progress made by developing countries in achieving sustainable development and reaching the MDGs was imperilled by the current global crisis, manifested by the rise in food and fuel prices, volatility in global financial markets and successive natural disasters caused by climate change, desertification and drought. In order to avoid further deterioration of the current situation, developed countries must fulfil their commitments and assume greater responsibility towards developing countries as quickly as possible.

80. His Government had made great strides towards achieving sustainable development and the MDGs, having adopted economic reforms that transformed the country into a social market economy based on the three pillars of sustainable development. However, his country's attempt to join the World Trade Organization had faced spurious political obstacles imposed by an influential nation, in spite of the Syrian Arab Republic's fulfilment of the membership criteria required by a purportedly international organization whose international character was restricted by certain countries. In that context, his delegation reiterated the importance of a non-politicized membership process that could not be exploited as a means of political coercion or pressure by some influential States in the Organization. He also denounced the use of unilateral coercive economic measures against developing economies, noting that the United States had imposed unilateral trade sanctions against the Syrian Arab Republic in 2004 and continued to do so, in violation of the principles of international law and trade regulations. Such measures heightened the climate of distrust in the viability of the multilateral trade system, and in the extent of some developed countries' commitment to it.

81. Perhaps the most significant obstacle to sustainable development affecting his country was the continued Israeli occupation of the Golan Heights, which constituted one of the Syrian economy's main agricultural and hydrological resources. The occupying Israeli forces continued their unsustainable exploitation of the Syrian Golan's natural resources and prevented their Syrian owners from benefiting from them, in addition to suppressing the rights of the population living under the occupation.

82. The intensified Israeli settlement policy and Judaization of occupied Arab lands, particularly occupied Jerusalem, had been strongly opposed by the international community because of its negative influence on the peace process. An Arab draft resolution currently before the Security Council condemned the reckless Israeli settlement policy.

83. The Secretary-General's report on promoting an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries for poverty eradication and sustainable development, taking into account current challenges (E/2008/68) had noted that 3 billion people currently lived in rural areas and that 980 million people still lived in extreme poverty.

84. His delegation called for more interaction between the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly in devising a global strategy to address the fallout from the rise in food prices, in conjunction with the Secretary-General's High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis. Furthermore, the strategy must be in line with national priorities and policies, supporting developing countries' efforts to increase agricultural production; calling for balanced biofuel production policies and improving the global trade climate in a way that would enable developing countries to profit from increased agricultural production and exports. In order to achieve

those results and implement the development agenda, it would be necessary to overcome the current stalemate in the Doha round of negotiations on global trade liberalization.

85. **Mr. Liu** Zhenmin (China) said that, because of the dual pressure of economic growth and environmental protection, developing countries were under great strain both from a financial and a technological perspective. With regard to climate change, the Kyoto Protocol should remain the core mechanism for addressing that issue, in strict observance of the principle of common but differentiated responsibility. Developed countries should take the lead in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increase financial assistance and technology transfer to developing countries. The Economic and Social Council must play an active role in coordinating sustainable development efforts.

86. China had reached a crucial stage of industrialization and urbanization, and a relatively high environmental price was being paid for its economic growth. Out of a sense of its responsibility to its people and humanity as a whole, the Chinese Government was making vigorous efforts to implement its sustainable development strategy through the voluntary adoption of specific policies and measures to strengthen legislation, enforcement and monitoring, which had achieved some results. Its efforts to implement its development strategy would change the course of its own development and also contribute to global development. It was confident that its long-term sustainable development goals would become reality.

87. **Mr. Benfreha** (Algeria) said that the current session of the Council provided an opportunity to address the global food crisis, which had resulted mainly from systemic dysfunction in the world economy. Algeria supported United Nations efforts to achieve sustainable development centred around its three pillars: economic development, social development and environmental protection. Poverty eradication efforts must also place greater emphasis on agricultural development and increased production in order to combat hunger effectively.

88. Algeria was especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change because most of its land was arid or semi-arid and, like other States in the region, it suffered from recurring drought and desertification. In addressing the situation, it applied the provisions of the United Nations Convention on Desertification, particularly in the areas of water resources, agriculture and forestry. Given the close linkage between desertification and poverty, concrete actions were needed at the international and regional levels. The national plan for agricultural and rural development had stimulated economic growth in rural areas and increased agricultural production by creating synergy among economic and social activities.

89. Considerable progress had been achieved towards sustainable development in Africa, although the continent remained unjustly marginalized. Africans, both individually and collectively, must take control of their destiny, and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) was a mechanism capable of meeting their expectations regarding the MDGs, provided that it received adequate international support. The United Nations system must play a greater role in supporting African efforts for the development of Africa, and the forthcoming high-level meeting of the General Assembly on Africa's development needs provided an opportunity for it to redouble its efforts in cooperation with that region.

90. **Mr. Carmon** (Observer for Israel) said that, along with the many pressing challenges facing the international community in the realm of economic and social development, the problems of climate change, deforestation, desertification and environmental degradation continued to intensify at a faster rate than the global efforts to stem them. Such threats to sustainable development demanded the highest level of cooperation and the strengthening of the mandate of the Council was therefore timely. The recent General Assembly Meeting on the Global Food Crisis and the Rome High-Level Conference on World Food Security were also steps forward, but increased focus on agriculture and technology transfer to developing countries would be needed to meet the challenges fully.

91. Rural development had emerged as a vital area of focus, both in feeding the hungry and alleviating poverty. Trends in agricultural production were troubling, however. Many countries lacked the necessary resources and infrastructure to put new methods to increased yields into practice. The broader context of development could not be ignored either, as development issues were linked and mutually reinforcing. Israel had recently hosted a special meeting on the Green Revolution in Africa, which had also marked the signing of a memorandum of

understanding between UNDP and Israel's Centre for International Cooperation. Israeli innovation, experience and know-how were already being used in Africa and in many other regions of the world as a contribution to global efforts to achieve sustainable development.

92. It was time for the focus to shift to implementation. The sustainable development issues discussed over the past several days were complicated, and positions could at times be polarized. Israel believed that the only way to deal with such issues effectively was through partnership. For its part, his Government looked forward to strengthening existing collaboration and creating new partnerships within the international community.

93. **Mr. Talbot** (Guyana) said that the international community was faced with a defining moment in action for sustainable development. Left unchecked, the energy, food and climate change crises together could portend not only the evaporation of the prospects for achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, but a reversal of hard-earned progress. There could be little doubt that the overall impact of the crises would be felt most severely by the most vulnerable segments of the global population. While there could be many underlying factors in the crisis, it was clearly detrimental to the interests of small economies and producers.

94. Although Guyana was a net exporter of food, it was vulnerable to the rise in the cost of fuel and other inputs for food production. The crisis could intensify the challenges to sustainable development at the national level and amplify inequalities between and within countries, thereby accentuating social, political and security risks. His Government thus emphasized sustained investment in agriculture in the medium and long term and efforts to create a fair global trading regime. The international financial institutions could assist by providing concessionary credit terms for small producers. In addition, a prudent approach to the use of biofuels should ensure that it helped to meet rather than aggravate the energy needs of developing countries. At the regional level, the members of the Caribbean Community had already taken steps to ensure the adequate supply and distribution of food within the region.

95. Even before climate change had emerged as one of the defining issues on the global development agenda, Guyana had understood the importance of pursuing a path of sustainable development. Over the past two decades it had pursued sustainable forestry practices in over one million hectares of pristine forest, and the Government had recently offered the conservation of the majority of its forest resources as part of its contribution to the mitigation of climate change, on the basis of economically viable arrangements.

96. An integrated approach to rural development was central to the achievement of sustainable development for the majority of developing countries, and agriculture had a proven comparative advantage in reducing poverty. For countries like Guyana, where agriculture remained the largest sector of the economy and employed over half the labour force, rural development could not be divorced from sustainable development.

97. The response to the current crisis had made it clear that there were many pervasive systemic factors hampering the growth of developing countries. Few would argue against the importance of good governance and the power of the market; on the other hand, few believed that total reliance on that paradigm alone provided a workable model in all situations. Guyana had thus advanced the case for a new system of global relationships that took those realities into account. The failure to complete the Doha Round of trade negotiations was a symbol of failed efforts at development cooperation, and its early conclusion would provide a much-needed infusion of confidence that could reinvigorate other dimensions of cooperation. The Council should seize the opportunity to exercise its responsibilities under the Charter and galvanize effective action by the international community.

98. **Mr. Kim** Bong-hyun (Republic of Korea) said that the global community was faced with the daunting challenges of the global economic slowdown, food and energy price hikes and the impact of climate change. Instability in the global financial markets had spilled over into the real economy, slowing world economic growth. In order to deal with the current crisis, a much higher level of economic and financial collaboration would be required of the international community than ever before.

99. His delegation commended the efforts of the Secretary-General to respond to the global food crisis,

which threatened to undermine the achievement of the MDGs. As a country which had successfully overcome hunger and poverty in a relatively short period of time, the Republic of Korea was willing to join the international effort in that area. In addition to providing humanitarian assistance, his Government was helping to increase agricultural productivity in developing countries by supporting bilateral projects.

100. Because of the debilitating impact of climate change, extreme weather and natural disasters occurred more frequently and resulted in greater property damage and loss of life. With the growth of climate change challenges, the time had come to integrate the concept of sustainable development into the fabric of global society.

101. Development objectives and the mobilization of financial resources were two sides of the same coin, and his delegation hoped that the Doha Review Conference on Financing for Development would encourage the efforts of the international community. For its part, his Government had made efforts to scale up its development assistance in recent years. In addition, as an innovative financing method, it had launched an air-ticket solidarity levy. Public-private partnerships also warranted special attention as additional sources of financing.

102. The current session was a milestone for the Council in the context of its strengthened framework, and his delegation hoped that the discussions would result in an action-oriented outcome.

103. **Archbishop Migliore** (Observer for the Holy See) said that the ongoing food crisis, as well as the economic downturn in some developed countries, highlighted the importance of the theme of the high-level segment. The food crisis was the result of short-sighted economic, agricultural and energy policies and had affected all societies, manifesting itself in a variety of ways, including food shortages and higher commodity prices. It posed a threat to the enjoyment of the right to be free from hunger and, in that connection, resolution S-7/1 of the Human Rights Council correctly emphasized the primary obligation of States, with the support of the international community, to make their best efforts to meet the vital food needs of their own populations through the adoption of measures that safeguarded human rights and the rule of law.

104. As a first step, action must be taken to assist those suffering from malnutrition and starvation. However, initial emergency aid must be accompanied by a concerted effort to invest in long-term and sustainable agricultural programmes at both the local and international levels. Agrarian reforms in developing countries must also be accelerated in order to ensure that smallholder farmers had the tools needed to increase production in a sustainable manner and to access local and global markets. Furthermore, agricultural and environmental policies must be reasonable and realistic in order to strike a balance between food production and environmental protection. The current food crisis re-emphasized the urgent need to explore new energy supplies which did not pit the right to food against other rights and needs.

105. His delegation welcomed the recommendations of the recent High-Level Conference on World Food Security, which offered a practical guide to dealing with the consequences of the food crisis and preventing its recurrence. The absence of consultation and multilateral cooperation had had tragic consequences in the twentieth century. The present crisis was an opportunity for the global community to come together and take concerted action.

106. **Mr. Piperkov** (Chairman of the Commission on Population and Development at its forty-first session) recalled that, at its forty-first session, the Commission on Population and Development had focused on the development aspects of population distribution. Although measures adopted to slow population growth had been effective — the current rate was 1.3 per cent, as opposed to 2 per cent in the late 1960s — there was no room for complacency. High fertility rates persisted in many of the least developed countries and continued rapid population growth threatened the sustainability of rural development. On the positive side, however, many governments had developed culturally sensitive policies that capitalized on women's desire to have fewer than five children and provided citizens with the information and means to achieve their desired family size. Access to safe and reliable methods of family planning was a key component of such policies.

107. Population disparities within countries must also be reduced. Generally speaking, rural populations had higher fertility rates than urban populations and less access to relevant social services. In addition, poor people in urban areas were not able to avail themselves of those services as easily as their wealthier

neighbours. Reducing such inequities was an effective way of improving human capital and reducing the incentive to have more children. Even in low-income countries, declining child mortality rates and improved access to educational facilities had prompted parents to have fewer children and invest more in each child. It was therefore particularly important to support the efforts of the least developed countries to achieve the MDGs and to prevent the potentially detrimental effects of global food crises on child health.

108. Efforts to slow population growth, reduce poverty, improve environmental protection and reduce unsustainable consumption and production patterns were mutually reinforcing. Thus, countries lagging behind in the transition to low fertility had no time to lose. The success of population education and family planning programmes in a variety of settings demonstrated that informed individuals could and would act responsibly, taking account of their own needs as well as those of their families and communities.

109. **Ms. Ndiaye** (Observer for the International Organization for Migration (IOM)) said that, in recent years, poverty reduction and/or elimination had become an important development indicator. However, income inequality between rural and urban populations in developing countries, as well as between developing and developed nations themselves, was growing. The current food crisis, as well as drought, desertification and land degradation brought about by climate change, had a direct impact on rural development, and phenomena linked to migration could also affect the successful achievement of the MDGs in both positive and negative ways.

110. Sustainable rural development could not be achieved without the full participation of women. However, their role in rural development efforts was constantly underappreciated and under supported and was often adversely affected by prevailing economic policies and other development-related conditions. Rural women lacked viable sources of income and their access to productive resources was limited. In order to remedy that situation, IOM was striving to create economic opportunities through, inter alia, the establishment of microenterprises and capacity-building. In addition, women who chose to migrate abroad must be provided with information about regular channels and made aware of the risks and possible consequences of illegal migration.

111. Governments and international organizations must also facilitate the participation of migrants in small and medium-sized enterprises, particularly in rural areas, and must recognize the vital role of those enterprises in generating employment and stimulating development. As a first step, assistance should be provided to enable small and medium-sized enterprises to penetrate non-traditional markets.

112. Young people often left rural communities to seek better economic opportunities elsewhere. In order to combat that phenomenon and capitalize on young people's potential to contribute to rural development, governments should provide training opportunities in the agricultural sector and make it easier for them to establish small businesses. Skills development and knowledge-sharing were also critical elements of efforts to eradicate poverty and promote rural development. In particular, migrants could contribute to the development of their countries of origin through remittances and transfer of technical expertise.

113. Developing countries required assistance to build the capacity needed to participate in the development of international frameworks and to devise and implement national policies reflecting domestic priorities and international commitments. That capacity must enable developing countries to manage their rural economies and the natural resources on which those economies were based in a sustainable manner. Developing countries should also consider the relevance of mainstreaming a migration perspective into their national poverty reduction and development strategies.

114. **Mr. Filho** (Observer for the International Association of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions (IAESCSI)) recalled that the three pillars of sustainable development were economic growth, social development and environmental protection and stressed that the main feature of the approach to sustainable development adopted by the United Nations was the establishment of a genuine global partnership. At the heart of that partnership lay the MDGs. Unfortunately, however, despite signs of progress in some areas, the overall implementation rate of those objectives was alarmingly low, and the international community as a whole must now take decisive action in three priority areas, namely public health, education and the fight against hunger.

115. IAESCSI, an organization bringing together some 60 economic and social councils and similar institutions from around the world, offered a unique forum for debate on questions relating to sustainable development and had taken a number of steps to raise awareness of the MDGs among members of civil society, in particular those involved with education and training, and non-governmental organizations. Civil society had a vital role to play in development efforts in poor countries: when it was well organized and had achieved a certain degree of independence from national political powers, it could act as an effective lever for achieving good governance and promoting development.

116. **Mr. Maradona** (Observer for the Intergovernmental Institution for the Use of Micro-algae Spirulina Against Malnutrition (IIMSAM)) said that unless the issue of malnutrition, and the inherent link between that phenomenon and the MDGs, was addressed by the international community as a matter of priority, sustainable development would remain unattainable. Spirulina, which was rich in essential proteins, minerals and vitamins, was consumed in more than 77 countries and could be administered to children, could be a key component of strategies to eradicate hunger, achieve food security and bridge the health divide. The Institution had already completed the first phase of a project to use spirulina to combat malnutrition and other concomitant barriers to development in Iraq and planned to launch similar projects in Brazil, Ghana, Haiti, Honduras and India.

117. Member States, civil society and other stakeholders must realize and exploit spirulina's potential as both a policy instrument and a practical method of eradicating hunger and achieving the MDGs. Since the physical conditions in most parts of the world were conducive to the cultivation of microalgae, spirulina could be produced in developing countries, where local cultivation, procurement and distribution would not only empower the communities concerned but would also build lasting capacity that would contribute to broader sustainable development efforts.

118. **Ms. Soeder** (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)), speaking also on behalf of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Food Programme (WFP), pointed out that, while no poor country had ever successfully reduced poverty without first increasing agricultural productivity, domestic investment in agriculture in most poor countries had long been in decline. The effects of high food prices were exacerbating the already critical situation in developing countries, with the poorest of the poor, in particular households headed by women and children, suffering the most.

119. In order to meet emergency food needs and to promote sustainable livelihood options for vulnerable men, women and youth, concerted action was needed. The United Nations system had already taken a number of steps to that end: the Secretary-General's High-Level Task Force was developing a comprehensive framework for action to ensure that international efforts to address the food crisis were well planned and coordinated, and the declaration adopted by the FAO High-Level Conference on World Food Security in June 2008 had served to re-establish agriculture as a priority issue.

120. The international community's first priority must be to feed the hungry, ensuring that all disadvantaged groups, such as women and indigenous peoples, were included. Efforts must also be made to boost smallholder agricultural supply for forthcoming crop seasons by increasing access to inputs and services and promoting appropriate policies. By focusing on small-scale interventions and rural microfinance, IFAD would devote US$ 1.3 billion to the funding of rural and agricultural projects in 2008 and had made US$ 200 million immediately available to meet urgent needs.

121. Short-term solutions must, however, be complemented by measures designed to ensure longer-term food security. The latter could be achieved only through investment in all aspects of the production cycle. In addition, smallholder farmers and workers must be involved in efforts to combat climate change, including the development of sustainable biofuels.

122. The world's 450 million smallholder farms were home to about two million men and women, yet investment in agriculture remained critically low. To put an end to that neglect, the proportion of official development assistance devoted to agricultural production and rural development should be increased from 3 to 10 per cent, with the ultimate aim of reaching 17 per cent. Sound policies that took account of new realities and global challenges, such as emerging pests

and diseases, climate change and demographic patterns, would also be needed.

123. In closing, she said that there was a growing and welcome recognition of agriculture's prominent role in the wider development agenda. For that reason, FAO, IFAD and WFP continued to assess the potential for further collaboration to support the implementation of internationally agreed development goals.

124. **Ms. Master Moos** (Observer for the All India Shah Behram Baug Society (for Scientific and Educational Research)) said that the water purification technology pioneered by Dr. Victor Inyushin was the only one of its kind able to purify water polluted by nuclear, biological and chemical waste, clearing contaminated water within three days. The technology could help Governments prevent waterborne diseases, and could provide potable water for millions of people worldwide, thus promoting the MDGs and sustainable development. Moreover, the clean water provided would enhance agricultural yield and thereby directly address the food crisis. The technology had been discovered in the former Soviet Union, where it had been used to clear nuclear waste from contaminated bodies of water. She expressed her gratitude to countries which would take up the patented technology.

125. **Mr. Parmegiani** (Observer for the Legion of Good Will) said that his organization worked to raise awareness of the importance of protecting the environment, with particular focus on the Brazilian Amazon rainforest and its role in global sustainable development. The organization based its recommendations on three axes: education of youth and adults on responsible use of natural resources; media promotion of public awareness campaigns; and networking and mobilization of multi-stakeholder cooperation, including NGOs, academia and the civil and private sectors. He referred those seeking more information to document E/2008/NGO/16.

126. **Mr. Clerc** (Observer for the World Family Organization) said that his organization, "Droit à l'Energie", once again called upon the United Nations to recognize access to energy as an essential need, given its crucial role in promoting economic and social development. In addition, the international community must develop an immediate plan of action to make energy available in various poverty-stricken regions.

127. The global rise in fuel prices was readily blamed on the market and the development of emerging countries, without taking into account the reprehensible actions of speculators who contributed to the global food crisis and to world hunger and poverty by pillaging grains to produce biofuels. He called on all States Members of the United Nations to restrict and monitor the use of food grains and arable lands in the production of bioethanol. The manufacture of biofuels from waste products might represent an intelligent and responsible solution that could meet a significant number of energy needs.

128. His organization was a strong advocate of electricity as a means of energy, but recognized that developing countries could not copy the power grids used in developed countries. While decentralized local production of electricity using renewable sources, such as solar and wind energy, would be more costly, it must be weighed against the greater cost of a lack of access to energy.

129. **Mr. Foussard** (Observer for Fundación Diagrama), also speaking on behalf of the International Juvenile Justice Observatory, said that his organization strongly supported the creation of an implementation plan on sustainable development for youth. The plan should focus on innovating strategies to incorporate youth-related sustainable development issues into national and international policies; improving and renovating national and international programmes in order to ensure sustainable livelihoods for young people; promoting youth leadership; empowering young people for action in the field of sustainable development and peace; and promoting ecopreneurship among youth in order to help build sustainable cities and to reduce rural environmental degradation. The plan should also elaborate social, economic and environmental indicators to assess the success of the youth-related MDGs.

The meeting rose at 8.15 p.m.